

# Jamestown Culture Festival

bringing together a diverse collection of artists

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What began as a small gathering of traditional regional artists in Jamestown this summer has grown to be a larger event than ever imagined.

Cultural diversity will be evident when the artists gather at Jamestown's McElroy Park August 5-6. Armenian and Russian folk artists, a Bosnian woodcarver, an East Indian dancer, a trio performing Irish music, a saddle maker, a Hidatsa storyteller, a Chippewa artist, an African drum maker, a Sudanese musician, and a Gaelic harpist are among those who will take part in the festival.

To fund the event, the Jamestown Arts Center received a heritage preservation grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Taylor Barnes, director of the Jamestown Arts Center, says the national grant raised the festival planning to a new level. The festival will include national heritage fellows along with state and regional folk artists.

Barnes and other arts volunteers are contacting artists and working with a community committee to line up vendors to offer a variety of ethnic foods and handle other logistics.



East Indian dancer  
Mousumi Bhandary

The National Buffalo Museum is organizing a polka mass for the weekend, and the Sons of Norway, Germans from Russia, and Swedish groups are helping with the planning. In conjunction with the festival, the Arts Center will feature the art exhibit *"It's All About Tradition"* July 4 – August 27, with the work of state artists, including many who are participating in the festival.

Barnes says there are individual cultural heritage festivals around the state. "But the premise behind this festival is to combine and share cultures. In this type of event, people become more aware of their own heritage as well as connect to other groups, from Native American to ancestral immigrants to recent refugees."

Troyd Geist, North Dakota's state folklorist, believes the quality of North Dakota's traditional artists is as high as anywhere in the country. "On both coasts, from east to west, people outside our state recognize our folk traditions and sometimes are even more appreciative than we are," says Geist. "A lot of our artists are exceptional, and this opportunity will showcase those hidden talents."

The artists scheduled for the Cultural Festival include the following:

**Norik Astvatsaturov** is an Armenian folk artist originally from Baku, Azerbaijan now living in Wahpeton. He is a traditional repousse artist who can create items out of copper, gold, silver, bronze and brass and often includes inlaid stones and stained glass. An example is shown below.

**Irina Astvatsaturova** is of Armenian, Russian and Latvian descent and does folk painting in those styles specific to various republics of the Russian Federation.

**Dick and Lisa Barrett** are master fiddlers who have taught Texas Fiddling to a large number





Irish music  
trio Chulrua

of people from all over the world. The Memphis Flyer recently

called Dick the “Grand Poo Bah” of competitive fiddling.

**Izudin Becic** is a recent refugee from Bosnia now living in Moorhead, Minnesota. He learned traditional woodcarving from his brother and has become a master -- carving both large and small objects and often using designs of intertwined vines and leaves, grapes, scrollwork and geometric patterns.

**Mousumi Bhandary** is an east Indian dancer who operates the Kala-Anjali India Culture Center in Fargo. Mousumi teaches both adults and students, “Dance and music are the best way to bind children to their roots and traditions,” he says.

**Chulrua** is a trio of musicians who play the old music of Ireland. Paddy O’Brien (master of the button accordion), Pat Egan (guitar) and Patrick Ourceau (fiddle) perform around the United States and Canada.

**Rex Cook** of Dickinson is a master artist at saddle making. He is a master at hand-carving leather as he builds each saddle by hand.

**Mary Louise Defender Wilson** is a Dakota/Hidatsa storyteller, elder and traditionalist whose skill and wisdom in storytelling is renowned throughout much of the United States. She has received numerous national awards and is a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship.

**Bamba Deing** grew up in Senegal, Africa, where he learned the art of drum making and batik.

**Sam Eli and Nancy Lee** are self-taught woodcarvers who have instructed at numerous events and exhibited throughout the Midwest.

**LeRoy Graber** from Freeman, South Dakota, learned how to weave willow baskets of all shapes from his grandfather, who brought the tradition from the steppes of Russia. He uses willows of different colors to weave designs into these creations.

**Dick Hansen** is a woodcarver living in Valley City.

**Wayne Hankel** from Fargo has been a woodcarver for over 17 years. He has taught beginning and intermediate woodcarving for the North Dakota Council on the Arts, 4-H members, the Boy Scouts, community education programs and others.

**Cliff Rime** is a woodcarver from Garrison, who will be

carving throughout the festival and demonstrating making fan-tailed birds.

**Debi Rogers** of Mandan is a North Dakotan of Irish-American descent who performs all things traditionally Irish with joyful exuberance. An apprentice wire-

strung Gaelic harpist, Rogers uses Celtic music, stories, dance and drama when teaching or performing.

**Ijo John Stephen** from southern Sudan now lives in Fargo, where he keeps alive the flickering flame of Ma’di culture. He uses a traditional instrument called an odungu, which he plays on a recently recorded CD of Sudanese music and stories.

**Marvin Bald Eagle Youngman** is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, who currently resides in St. John. He makes a variety of traditional items such as flutes, bags, rattles, traditional games equipment and chokers.

The festival, which is free and open to the public, will take place at McElroy Park. It starts Friday, August 5 from 6 to 10 p.m., then continues Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. For more information or to become part of the festival, contact the Jamestown Arts Center at 701-251-2496.

*The culture festival is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the North Dakota Council on the Arts, the North Dakota Community Foundation, Buffalo City Tourism, North Dakota State Tourism, and Montana Dakota Utilities. For more information about the North Dakota Council on the Arts and its programs that support communities across the state, call 701-328-7590, or visit its website at [www.discovernd.com/arts](http://www.discovernd.com/arts).*

Gaelic harpist  
Debi Rogers



Woodcarver Dick Hanson

